

# Honoring Our Students' Voices to Create a Brighter Future: Building, Supporting, and Maintaining a Dialogic Classroom

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# References for Building a Dialogic Community

- *Opening Dialogue: Understanding the Dynamics of Language and Learning in the English Classroom* by Martin Nystrand with Adam Gamoran, Robert Kachur, and Catherine Prendergast
- *Curriculum as Conversation: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning* by Arthur N. Applebee
- *Talking in Class: Using Discussion to Enhance Teaching and Learning* by Thomas M. McCann, Larry R. Johannessen, Elizabeth Kahn, and Joseph M. Flanagan
- *Teaching Argument Writing* by George Hillocks, Jr.
- *Transforming Talk into Text: Argument Writing, Inquiry, and Discussion* by Thomas M. McCann

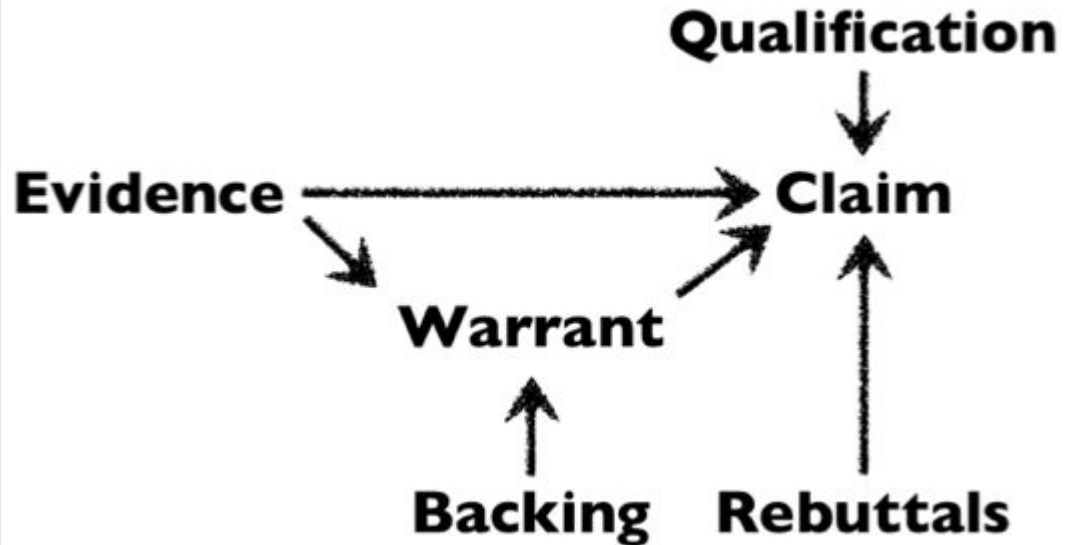
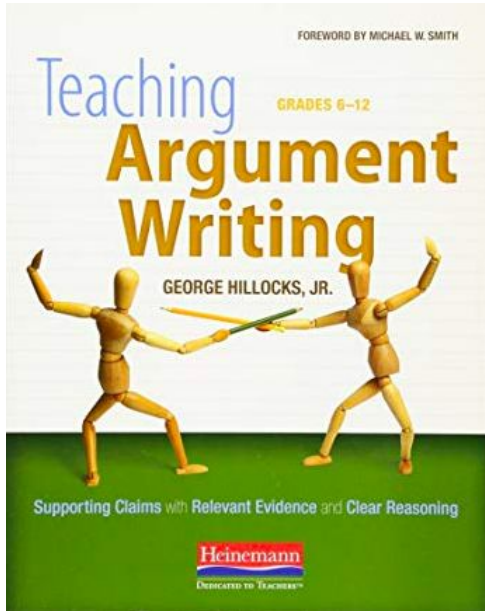
# Assumption One

Assumption One: Discussions can and must be assessed like reading and writing which means teachers must scaffold skill sequence of discussions and provide feedback on these discussions.

4 - Exceeding Proficiency	3 - Meeting Proficiency	2 - Approaching Proficiency	1 - Still Developing
I can share information by integrating the delivery, content and structure in an insightful manner precisely suited to the task. I demonstrate effective listening by responding appropriately, encouraging others to respond and synthesizing ideas throughout a conversation.	<b>I can share information so that the delivery, content, and structure are appropriate to the task. I demonstrate effective listening by responding appropriately.</b>	I can share information so that the delivery, content and/or structure are sometimes appropriate to the task. I demonstrate listening by responding.	I can share information when prompted and/or echo what others have said. I am inattentive during discussion.

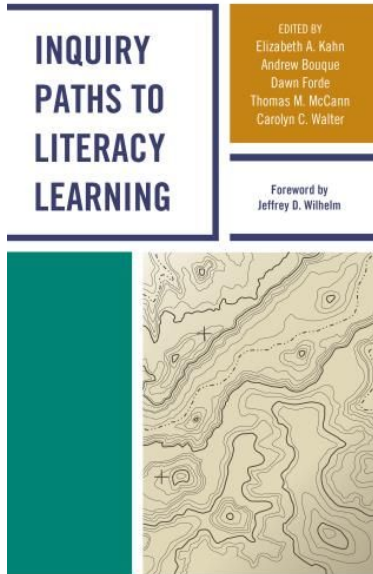
# Assumption Two

A framework of argument allows one to assess discussion by using the same literacy skills and vocabulary that students use as they read and write.

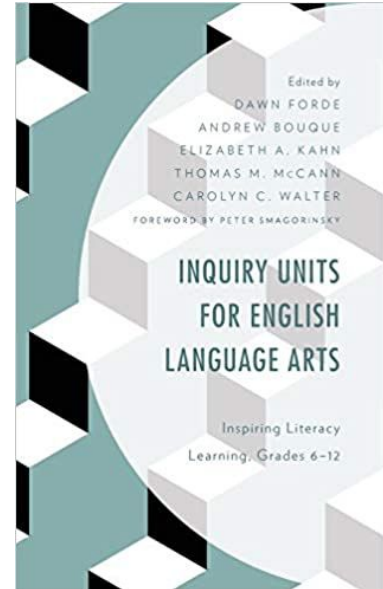


# Assumption Three

Assumption Three: Inquiry is the ideal pedagogical approach to honor a dialogic classroom since unit design requires building conceptual/thematic understanding and relies on collaboration.



Many of the following activities and transcripts come from these publications which not only contain step by step procedures for designing inquiry sequences but possess ready made activities and units that you can use or adapt to your classrooms.



# Step One: Understanding the Criteria for a Quality Conversation

Listen to the following discussion about what makes a successful student noting the strengths and weaknesses of the conversation. Listen for the following:

- In what ways are the participants displaying or not displaying a framework of argument?
- In what ways are the participants displaying or not displaying the behaviors of listening and speaking well?
- In what ways are the participants displaying or not displaying that they have read well?

# What is a Successful Student? Transcript

**Amanda:** I'm Amanda. My claim is that hard work and dedication are two of the qualities that one should possess in order to be successful. My main evidence that led me to believe in this was in Document B. It says, "Successful students do all of their homework and never turn in work late. The key to doing well in school is responsibility. The successful student is the responsible student." I believe that's also dedication because if you're dedicated to your work and dedicated to what you're doing, you will do well and get all your work done and your grades will improve, so in order to be as successful as possible, your grades need to be good.

**Bernard:** Uh, Bernard. To a certain extent I agree with you, Amanda. I feel like working hard is really important, and I feel like to go beyond that, a successful student should be passionate about their studies and doing what they want. That's like, hard-working is just doing it just for the grade. Being passionate is going one step further and doing it because you want to do it, and you want to do well.

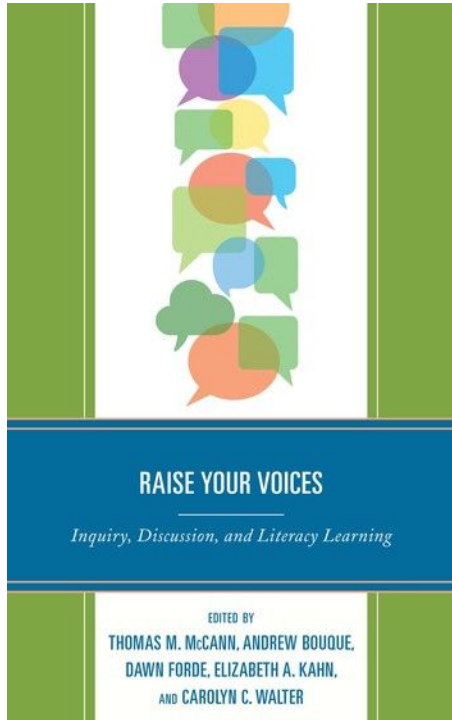
**Sonya:** Um, Sonya. I agree with Bernard and sort of disagree with Amanda because I said a successful student is someone who doesn't always focus on the grade but the aspect of growth and development like a learner, and I used evidence from Document C. I said that the students were dropping out of college to become like inventors and they were becoming successful without the college education.

**Jonathan:** Um, Jonathan, um, ok. So, I agree with Sonya and Bernard. I said, my claim was a successful student is one who strives for a higher level of knowledge a growth inside and outside of the classroom, and one of my reasons was a student who always strives, or one of the reasons I believe the claim is true is a student always strives for growth and will always improve. And I used those from the sources Sonya did, Source C, talking about how they dropped out of college to pursue what they wanted to do and grow outside of the classroom.

**Margie:** Um, Margie. I agree with Bernard because I think that a successful student reflects a hard-working, diverse and determined and passionate individual, and I found evidence for this that a determined individual perseveres through challenging situations in Source B when it says, "Many students do well in school with these assets but the truly successful student is the one who doesn't give up when faced with academic challenges." I thought that working through a challenging situation can be just as important as solving an equation at times, and intelligence would be the road to nothing without the determination and passion to do well in school.



# *Raise Your Voices: Sequence for Building a Dialogic Community*



A Contribution:

Uptake + Point + Evidence + Analysis

### **Speaking/Listening Rubric : Freshman Accel English**

<b>4 - Exceeds</b>	<b>3 - Meets</b>	<b>2 - Approaching</b>	<b>1 - Still Developing</b>
I can initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, making substantial and insightful contributions, as well as encouraging others to do the same.	<b>I can initiate and participate effectively in class discussions on a variety of topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing my own ideas clearly and persuasively.</b>	I participate in class discussions but limit my participation to listening and occasional contributions; I express my own ideas, relying on paraphrasing.	I limit my participation to listening.

<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>How Well Am I Doing?</b>	<b>Teacher Feedback</b>
Participation  + / --		Engages frequently in the discussion; Offers original claims and evidence, asks questions to clarify or explore topics, or challenges peer contributions. Displays awareness of community and invites others to speak and share opinions.  Other:
Responding to Others  + / --		<u>Builds upon, clarifies, or challenges</u> claims, evidence and warrants offered by others <u>through effective uptake</u> . Avoids "Adding on," etc. Respectfully acknowledges the contributions of classmates. Actively listens to respond even when not in the discussion group.  Other:
Using Textual Evidence  + / --		Directs peers to text <u>by using specific textual evidence</u> from multiple places in the text/s, properly cited. <u>Provides appropriate context</u> in order to "frame" evidence and display accurate reading. Calls attention to textual meaning via "spotlighting" at the word, phrase, figurative or structural levels; <u>employs framework of argument (claim, evidence, warrant, backing) in contributions</u> .  Other:
Preparation  + / --		Prepares for the discussion using appropriate organizers, notes and annotations. Can provide clear evidence of thoughtful preparation.  Other:

# Step Two: Building a Conceptual Framework and the Vocabulary to Engage in Academic Discussion Using Pre-Reading Activities

**Directions:** Below, you will find “pairs” of statements, life philosophies, from some of history’s most influential thinkers. Choose which philosophy statement best reflects your experience. Be prepared to support your responses with specific evidence you present and defend in discussions. This evidence can come from a variety of sources, including: news, literature (both fiction and nonfiction), history, movies, entertainment, or personal examples.

**Statement One: Life is the game that must be played.** – Edwin Arlington Robinson, poet

**Statement Two: If they give you ruled paper, write the other way.** – Juan Ramon Jimenez, poet

**Evidence:**

# Scenario Activities

What actions are ethical? When are you justified in breaking a societal rule or cultural norm?

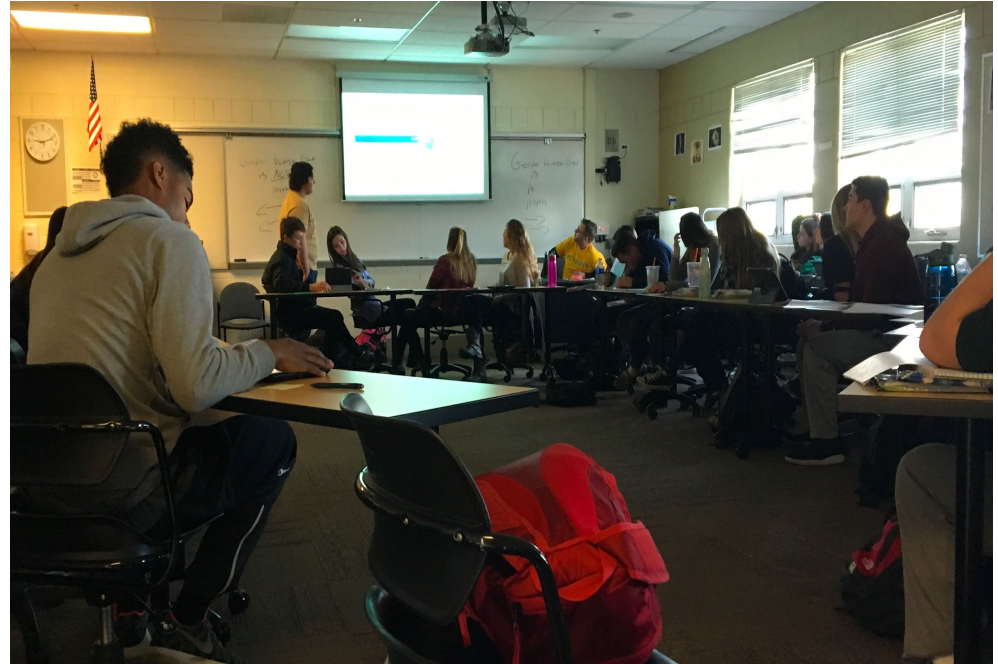
A group of college friends met at the Candlelight Lounge to take advantage of “reduced price Thursday,” which offered discounts on beer and wine. Samantha and Ahmed were not drinking at all. Samantha was limiting her carbohydrates intake while Ahmed observed religious prohibitions against alcohol. Still, they enjoyed the company of their friends at the bar. After a couple of hours of drinking, Samantha and Ahmed’s friend Cecil weaved his way toward the bathroom, bumping tables along the way and almost walking in front of a darts game in progress. Samantha had seen this sort of behavior with Cecil before and knew he was too drunk to drive. She noticed that he had left his car keys and some loose change on the bar where they were seated. Samantha handed the car keys to Ahmed and insisted that he drive the car back to Cecil’s apartment, assuring Ahmed that she would see that Cecil got home safely. Samantha took charge of Cecil property without his permission. If they are justified in doing so, what is the basis for their justification?

# Rules for Breaking an Unjust Rule or Societal Norm

- A person might be justified in breaking the law one were pursuing a significant (or “greater”) good.
- Before a person breaks the law in pursuit of a “greater good,” that person should exhaust all of the options available under the law.
- In breaking the law in pursuit of a “greater good,” a person should not cause more harm.
- Before one breaks the law on behalf of other people one should have sufficient knowledge and authority to take action.
- A person should not take rebellious action rashly, but should proceed with a reasonable expectation that goals can be achieved.
- A person can be justified in breaking an unjust law.

# Step Three: Designing Discussion Opportunities

“While almost any discussion in an English language arts class **will be a positive learning experience**, discussions are most powerful in advancing literacy learning when they are planned and purposeful. Discussions are most powerful when they are *authentic* and when they are **integral to inquiries into matters of consequence** to adolescents”  
(McCann, 2019, p. 5).



# Step Three: Designing Discussion Opportunities

- Design discussions around inquiry themes and incorporate **complex literature**
- Provide problem-based situations or **issues of importance** for students to discuss
- **Teachers should minimize their voices**, ideally **providing only necessary procedures**, strategies, and clarification to facilitate **student-to-student dialogue / student-led discussions**.
- Provide **time to prepare** claims, evidence, reasoning in response to inquiry based prompts
- Use **initial guidelines / criteria** from pre-reading to **build more complex understandings**

# Large Group Discussion Activity for Rebellious Action

## **Rebellious Actions in *Fahrenheit 451*: Justified or Not?**

Directions: In small groups prepare arguments (claim, evidence, explanations, and warrants) for the situation you were assigned, assessing **whether each action is justified given our guidelines for ethical actions**. Your group will not only want to explore the action itself but the causes and effects of each action. Then your group will take an opposing position after seeing the preparation of different situation. Your opposing position should also possess the elements of argument (claim, evidence, explanations, and warrants). Your group may even want to utilize the texts from the pre-reading materials to support your arguments.



## Situations from *Fahrenheit 451*

1. Montag steals books and hides them in his house. Is Montag justified?
2. Beatty visits Montag to persuade Montag into returning to his job. Is Beatty justified?
3. Montag decides to visit Faber about his frustration with life? Is Montag justified?
4. Montag and Faber decide to plant books in firemen's houses? Are they justified?
5. Montag reads the poem to Mildred's friends. Is Montag justified?
6. Montag kills Beatty. Is Montag justified?

# Transcript for Discussion of Situation One

Claudia: Well, it's important to note that when Montag stole the book, he did so because he was curious—Clarisse asks him, “Are you happy?” (Bradbury, 1951, p. 7), and Montag knows he's not happy. In fact, he's quite miserable because when he found that Mildred overdosed, he felt like he was “cut in half” (Bradbury, 1951, p. 11). **Montag stole the book because he didn't want to witness Mildred's suicide, and therefore because he wants to save his wife, he's justified.**

Nathan: **Claudia—are you suggesting** Montag's concern for his wife gives him the right to steal the book?

Claudia: Yes.

Nathan: **Well, I would like to disagree with you because books are illegal here**—and while he might want to help himself and Mildred, he didn't tell Mildred that he had the books in the first place. He just hid the books in the house. He even confessed to her saying, “This is your house as well as mine, I feel it's only fair that I that I tell you something now. I should have told you before” (Bradbury, 1951, p. 62). **Montag uses the word “fair” here, meaning that Mildred had a right to** know about his act because her security is now threatened because of his choices not hers. Mildred should feel betrayed by Montag.

Alyssa: Not only is Mildred unaware of Montag's actions, as Nathan proved, she also wouldn't consider stealing a book in the first place. When she sees the books for the first time, **Bradbury compares the books to a "pack of mice"** (Bradbury, 1951, p. 63). Mildred "seizes a book and runs to the incinerator" (Bradbury, 1951, p. 63). **Mice are often considered pests that homeowners find disgusting. Mildred is appalled to have the books in her house.** She also "seizes" or grabs the book in a flurry and runs to destroy it. Mildred is a conformist as we established earlier, and she won't change. Montag knew that his wife would freak out over the books, but he hid them anyway in her house.

Patrick: While Montag does admit that he should have told Mildred the truth, we know that Mildred out of touch with her emotions. She calls the actors on the television her "parlor family," and she can't "remember where [she] met Montag" (Bradbury, 1951, p. 40). The fact that she can't distinguish who matters makes her unreliable—Montag is trying to save her and their marriage. If anything, Montag is acting as "an extremist for love" as Martin Luther King, Jr. noted. Montag loves his wife and so if you love someone, you will do whatever it takes to save them.

Michael: I think we should also point out that Montag didn't even know that he was taking the book in the first place. It says on page 35 that his hand had "a brain of its own." Montag isn't thinking about the act. When Montag mindlessly steals the book, it isn't with intent to help or destroy—he impulsively acts because he just wants to understand life. Maybe his subconscious is telling him that he has no other choice.

Nathan: Blaming your hand isn't going to hold up in this world.

# Student-Led Discussions, Student-Led Inquiry

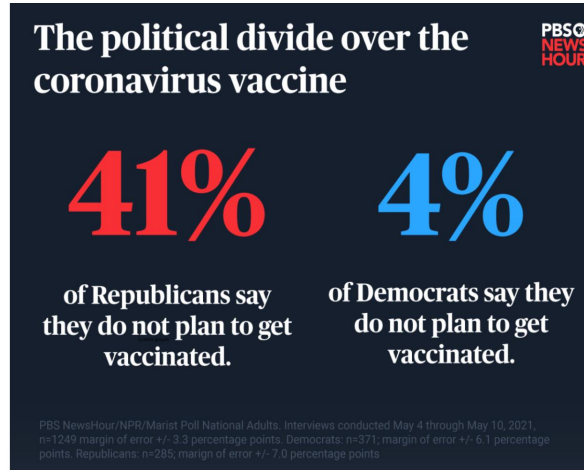
**“No two inquiry classes are ever the same, even if they experience the same curricular sequence, because the content that students create -- the ‘answers’ they generate to the inquiry questions -- will always be a reflection of the diverse class community and its unique, individuals voices”** (Bouque, 2019, 95).



# **Political Thought – Critical Conversations:** *Discussions that Matter*

One of the goals of *Political Thought* is to provide you with **meaningful opportunities to discuss the issues that are most relevant and current to American Society and your life.** This activity will give you the chance (1) to choose an issue that you believe is significant, (2) to research that issue and prepare relevant information, (3) to lead a discussion on that issue, and (4) to participate in conversations that span a range of critical and relevant topics.

# Multiple Perspectives



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**There is a large difference in opinion between Democrats and Republicans surrounding the vaccine. Why do you think that is? And what are the different opinions?**

Regarding a possible mandate of vaccines, Biden pointed directly to GOP governors who have blocked measures such as school mask mandates, warning, “If these governors won’t help us beat the pandemic, I’ll use my power as president to get them out of the way.”

While,

Republicans and some union officials such as Mississippi Republican Gov. Tate Reeves state “the president is overreaching his constitutional authority.” And “The vaccine itself is life-saving, but this unconstitutional move is terrifying,”

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# Opening Activities

- ***Our society turns every issue into a political issue.***

*Strongly Agree*

*Agree*

*Disagree*

*Strongly Disagree*

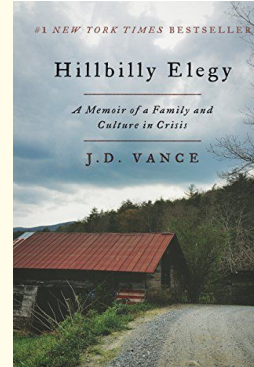
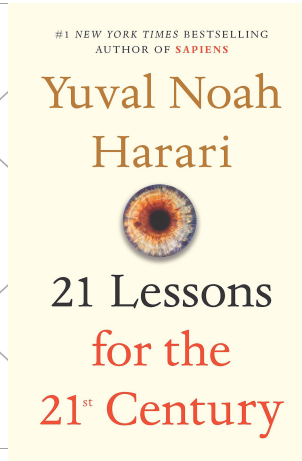
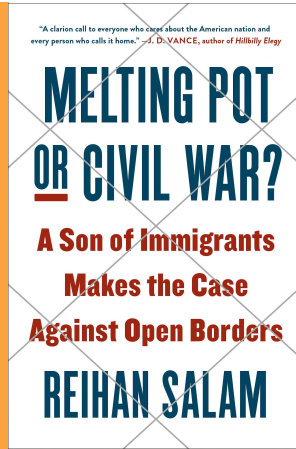
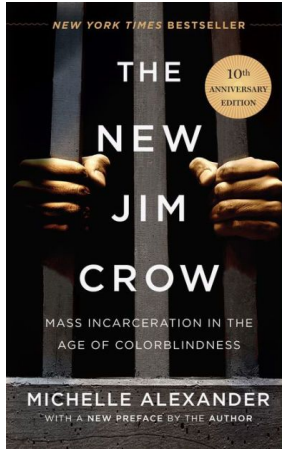
- ***The Federal Government should mandate the Covid-19 vaccine (What about states? Employment?).***
  - Support ----> Make a claim defending the statement above using specific examples and / or rationale to support.***
  - Refute ----> Refute the statement above using any specific examples and / or rationale to support.***

# Student Response

“I think **this goes back to one of the things we did on the first day of school** when we were talking about those questions... and one of them was ‘society makes every decision a political thing...’ So, vaccines themselves are not a political thing -- they’re about the covid pandemic. You wouldn’t say, ‘I am getting a vaccine because I’m a Democrat; I’m not getting the vaccine because I am a Republican.’ I think what makes it a political thing is the threat of mandating it, and that threatens -- **in some people’s eyes** -- their bodily autonomy. Some people don’t want to want to put things in their body that they don’t know.



# Small Group Discussion & Using Multiple Major Texts



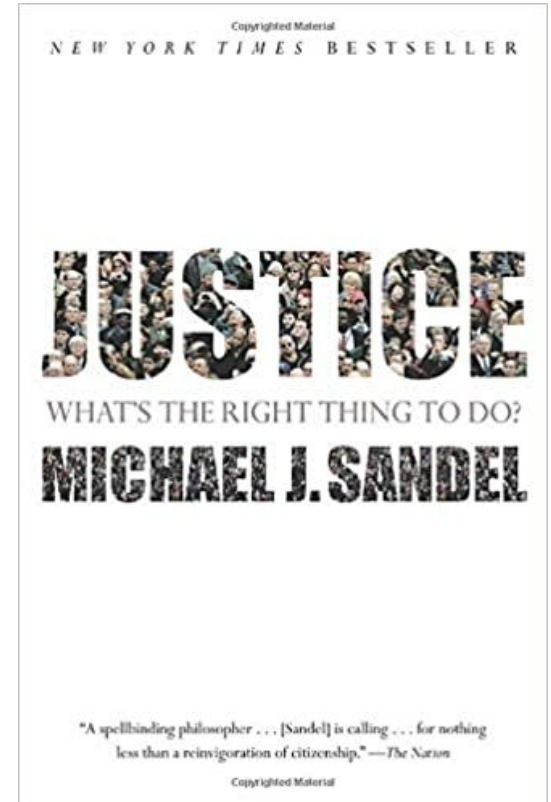
Ben McDonald is a recent graduate from the University of Illinois with a degree in marketing. After graduation, Ben applied for a dozen jobs, and received interviews from four different companies. He soon realized the competitive nature of the job market. After interviewing with a number of different companies, he only received one: Ben was offered a job with tobacco giant, Philip Morris International. Ben realized that the job would require him to market for Philip Morris, ultimately trying to persuade people to use a toxic product. Without the job, his parents would be forced to continue to support Ben.

- What are the **consequences** of taking the job? What are the **consequences** of not taking the job?
- What should Ben do? Should he take a moral stand at his parents' expense? Does this recommendation support the **greater good** or his **individual interests**?
- Is a marketing consultant for a tobacco company responsible for those that smoke?

# Small Group Discussion Prompt & Self-Assessment

## Prompt:

- What is this book saying about **civic virtue vs individual responsibilities (greater good, self-interest, civic duty)**?
  - **Provide supporting evidence to develop your claim.**
- To what **extent do you agree with that claim (POV)**?
  - **Provide supporting evidence to develop your claim**



# Self-Assessment

## Group Criteria

- Did we reach full participation, ideally balanced participation?
- Did we remain focused on the topic at hand?
- Did we use the entirety of the time, possibly even having more to say than the time allotted?
- Did the behaviors of the group reflect sincere listening, undoubtable respect, and genuine interest?
- Did we explore a variety of viewpoints?
- Was there strong evidence, argumentation, and other discussion conventions used?

## Self-Assessment

- Did I convey a variety of discussion moves (claims, questions, counter arguments)?
- Did I use evidence to support my claims?
- Did I use uptake to acknowledge previous points and clarify my listening?
- Did I track key passages in my own book?
- Did I take sufficient notes to track the conversation?

# Step Four: Using Discussion Transcripts as Texts

*Prompt: Over the past several days, we have engaged in conversations about the nature of humanity and the unique traits that make us human. Reflect upon single discussion or several specific comments made by your peers that helped you clarify your understanding of our inquiry into “What does it mean to be human?”*

Student excerpt:

...while others believed that machines are superior because they are more efficient, faster, and smarter than humans. However, the part that intrigued me the most was how everyone was taking into consideration how the world as a whole would be affected if we continued to develop technology. ***For example, Darshan brought up the point that “the advancement of technology without the proper ethical means can create a situation where people in power are the only ones benefiting from the advancement of technology.”*** Regardless of anyone’s opinion on this belief, it showed even in our classroom that we as humans and as a society look at how decisions impact everyone around us and take into account the impacts our actions have. I think that in itself proves that humans have the ability to communicate with each other and also understand and sympathize with people from all over the world.

*Prompt: The culmination of your nearly 12 years of personal experience in schools and your opportunity to read and reflect on the purpose of education has made you particularly knowledgeable about the student experience in our schools. You have been asked to write a letter reflecting on your overall education experience and, ultimately, to recommend a reform or change that should take place in the next school year that will significantly improve the overall experience of all students in your school (or in earlier grades). Your letter will be formal, but it is also based on your personal experience (you can write in 1st person "I") as well as supporting sourcework. Your letter will have the honor of being read to an audience of school administrators, elected officials and the general public who will carefully consider your recommendation. Your honesty and integrity will be a significant factor in the effectiveness of your argument.*

Student excerpt:

Schools should set up students to be successful in anything they want, but sometimes that's just not how it works. For example, during a class discussion on the purpose of education, Tate Bentsen brought up a good point about how "Education should be a pathway for someone to pursue a dream" (Bentsen). I do agree with this because it's similar to what I believe an education should be, but I also think that school should show us what to do with the knowledge we've learned. If we go through 12 plus years of schooling and come out of high school not knowing what to do with it, what's the point of it? It goes back to the point that education, more so school, should cater to our interests and point us in the right direction for our interests. This will allow students to learn academically but also be more prepared for what to do after high school; that could be a trade school, college, university, or starting a business. Ken Robinson, in his TedTalk "Do Schools Kill Creativity," argues a similar point as Bentsen, but he gives good reason for why most of the time formal education doesn't give students a path to be what they want to be: "Our education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability" (Robinson 10:51). It's true that the education system was made all around to serve those who are academically smart. If a person is not perceived as "smart" then one ends up in the workforce working nine to fives at fast-food restaurants or grocery stores. People won't have a chance to be educated in something that they are interested in or something that they love or are naturally talented at if schools do not see that as something academically possible.

## Step Five: Crafting Authentic Writing Experiences

- Writing a recommendation to a school district on whether the school should be named after a human being or a natural landscape (Thomas Jefferson, Adlai Stevenson, Andrew Jackson vs. Rolling Meadows, Floodrock, and Stone Ridge )
- Creating a proposal on how to depict Pocahontas in a traveling museum exhibit, recognizing the costs and benefits that come with this representation (Is she a survivor, traitor to her people, a feminist, the first person of color to play a role in the making of America, or a victim of colonialism?)
- Writing a letter to Montag as a book person noting why his rebellious acts in the novel were ineffective